

NTSB Forum on Driver Education and Training
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Remarks by J. Peter Kissinger
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I would like to start by complimenting the NTSB for tackling this subject and for holding this forum. It is most timely. Thanks for the opportunity to share with you some thoughts.

The AAA Foundation is the research affiliate of AAA and the AAA Auto Clubs throughout the United States. The Foundation is an independent not-for-profit organization that is entirely dedicated to enhancing traffic safety. Our mission is to identify traffic safety problems, foster research that seeks solutions, and disseminate information and educational materials based primarily on that research. Most of our revenue is received from AAA, AAA Clubs, AAA members and CAA, the Canadian Automobile Association.

Throughout its 50 + year history, the Foundation has funded hundreds of research projects covering a wide range of safety issues, but with special emphasis on those dealing with human behavior.

Today, I'd like to highlight some of key Foundation efforts related to Driver Education and Training, past and present.

In its early years, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety placed heavy emphasis on developing a wide range of traffic safety videos many of which have been extensively utilized by public and private driver training schools and instructors. More recently, the Foundation has placed less emphasis on developing traffic safety videos but routinely develops a range of safety brochures and other informational materials. For example, presently, we are developing a new safety video/dvd entitled "*Crash Course: What do you need to know before and after a crash*" in conjunction with the Better Business Bureau. And we continue to sell a portfolio of videos through our safety catalog.

From a research perspective, clearly the most relevant project to today's forum is the Foundation's *Novice Driver Education Model Curriculum Outline* that was originally published in 1995. This effort was driven by a broad "Research Advisory Committee" comprised of many of the organizations scheduled to appear at this forum. The actual work was conducted by six researchers from North Port Associates, Interscience America, and Queens University.

The research team reviewed the current driver education literature in order to identify the novice driver needs, evaluate methods of instruction and assess the effectiveness of driver education in influencing behavior. It then went on to propose performance objectives for driver education graduates and methods for achieving those objectives. In short, it

attempted to “reinvent driver education” into a form that reduces crashes by novice drivers.

Eight years later I believe the key findings and recommendations from this research project are just as valid as the day they were first issued. Unfortunately, with a few notable exceptions, such as AAA’s License to Learn program and those efforts that have emphasized the role of parental involvement as part of Graduated Driver Licensing Laws passed throughout the country, we have made scant little progress in enhancing driver education in this country, yet alone “reinventing it.” Thus, I would most certainly recommend the Safety Board review this report. Attached is a copy for your record.

Inspired by its own research project, the AAA Foundation almost immediately launched a development effort that led to the release of its “*driver-ZED*” interactive risk management training tool” that has proven to be the Foundation’s most successful educational product. When released in 1997, Driver-ZED was a cutting edge advance in pc-based interactive training technology that focused explicitly on giving novice drivers much needed experience in risk identification, evaluation and avoidance. As such, it complements and supplements driver education programs, such as AAA’s License to Learn.

Driver-ZED is still a “state of the art” product from a technological standpoint and has been emulated by others. For example, Great Britain recently mandated a new ZED-like hazard perception test as part of its new driver-licensing program. And, the Federal Highway Administration is currently developing a new interactive training tool for work-zone safety that is built off of the ZED technology.

To conclude my remarks, I’d like to highlight three projects that are part of our “ongoing research” that in my opinion, are all relevant to today’s forum.

First, we have funded the Traffic Injury Research Foundation (TIRF), in Ottawa, Canada to conduct a major research initiative entitled, “*Reducing the Crash Risk for Young Drivers.*” This project, which is a very ambitious 27-month research effort, will explicitly examine why teens continue to crash at alarming numbers. A major component of the project will be an in-depth evaluation of graduated driver licensing provisions so as to enhance further this most beneficial safety intervention. Methodologically, the effort will include comprehensive analyses of crash data and surveys of novice drivers and parents. We are optimistic that the study will provide important new insights to novice driver behavior that can be incorporated into existing and future driver education efforts.

Second, we will be evaluating a very exciting pilot program that was administered by the Alberta Motorists Association, the CAA Club in that region of Canada. Under the “*Teen Good Driving Incentive*” program financial incentives, in the form of an insurance premium rebate, were provided to novice drivers that remained “violation and crash free” for specified periods. Anecdotally, the Club believes this program has been quite successful, and it has asked us to conduct an independent, scientifically sound evaluation of it. And, although this is not directly related to driver education per se, again, as in the

case of the previous research, I believe an evaluation of this unique, incentive program should provide invaluable insights that could be incorporated into future driver education efforts.

And third, we hope to initiate a project to develop “*Guidelines for the Evaluation of Driver Education Programs*.” From our perspective there have been too few evaluations of driver education, especially in this country, and those that have been done have often been hampered by methodological weaknesses or lack of scientific rigor. This effort, which will incorporate an international advisory panel and associated workshop, will develop suggested technical protocols and guidance to support future evaluations of driver training for novice drivers. Basically, we hope to develop a tool kit to support higher quality, future evaluations.

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety is pleased to have participated in this forum and is willing to supplement today’s testimony as deemed appropriate by the Safety Board.